

CONFUSED FLOUR BEETLE AND OTHER COLEOPTERA IN STORED MARIJUANA

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On 17 January 1979, we received a request for assistance from Mr. Harry Merritt, a Douglas, Arizona, pest control operator, who services the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration Building in that city. He explained that clerical workers and administrative officers were complaining about large numbers of small beetles which had become a nuisance in the offices. The infestation had not declined in spite of scheduled pest control service and Mr. Merritt suspected that the "evidence room" with its several tons of confiscated marijuana (*Cannabis sativa* Linnaeus) was the source of beetles. Specimens provided by Mr. Merritt were *Tribolium confusum* Jacquelin du Val. On 26 January 1979, we visited the facility to examine the infestation. We found that virtually all of the large "evidence boxes" contained at least some infested 1 kg bricks, and that all of the bricks in some boxes were infested. Several infested bricks were broken and their contents carefully examined. We found approximately 20% of the contained *Cannabis* seed had been hollowed, presumably by *Tribolium* larvae. To test this, we set aside several g of whole seeds in each of two petri dishes sealed with masking tape. Upon examining this material several weeks later, we discovered that one dish contained one adult confused flour beetle and a damaged seed.

In addition to *Tribolium*, we discovered numerous specimens of *Trogoderma variabile* Ballion and *Attagenus megatoma* (Fabricius) (Dermestidae), and *Adistemia watsoni* (Wollaston) and *Microgramme arga* (Reitter) (Lathridiidae). Representatives of these families were not uniformly distributed as were the *Tribolium*. The dermestids were generally found on the floor of the evidence room and the lathridiids on the tops of evidence boxes and entrapped in the adhesive tape used to bind the bricks of *Cannabis*. Since lathridiids are fungus feeders, we inquired as to the usual condition of the illicit product when it was confiscated. Agents informed us that the material was frequently of very poor quality and often moldy because it was stored in the open air on the Mexican side of the border while awaiting transportation to the U.S.

Arnaud (1974) surveyed the arthropods associated with *Cannabis* stored in the Hall of Justice in San Francisco. He found one species of mite, four species of flies, one species of Lepidoptera, and six species of beetles. Of the beetles, only *Microgramme arga* was common to both surveys.

Acknowledgments

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Literature Cited

- Arnaud, P. H. 1974. Insects and a mite associated with stored *Cannabis sativa* Linnaeus. Pan-Pac. Entomol., 50:91-92.